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as anybody. In fact, the Commissioner alleges that these poor laborers, working at precarious wages on their own land, which is held in "the grasping hand of moneyed monopolists and powerful and influential leaders and politicians," are growing "annually and daily poorer and less able to assert their equal ownership and tribal claim—their constitutional privilege and treaty rights."

It seems, curiously enough, that ingenuity and ability get to the front in the Indian Territory just the same as they do in Ohio or Georgia. One wealthy Creek, residing in a costly home, with spacious barns, stables, etc., his ranch skillfully managed, with modern methods and implements, raised, in addition to hay, 25,000 bushels of corn in one season, and fattened 200 head of beef cattle and 300 hogs for market, his joint owners, who plowed the corn and fed the hogs, meanwhile living in huts and cabins, without so much as a month's provisions for themselves or their families.

"Now this condition of semi-slavery," adds the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "exists in each of the Five Civilized Nations, and grows directly out of the holding of lands in common." This conclusion is calculated to surprise all champions of the single-tax theory and make the injudicious grieve; but the Commissioner goes on to declare that "this is the fundamental error from which proceed the troubles which afflict the Five Nations. The practical operation of this system of holding creates an aristocracy out of a few powerful and wealthy leaders, while the poor, although equal owners, are so impoverished as not to be able to assert their equal right of property and manhood."

Such estimate as is possible indicates that although every adult man is the possessor of from 500 to 1,000 acres of arable land wherever he may choose to select it yet, in fact, four out of five of these same men prefer to work by the month for little more than their board and clothes.

Is this the custom of the great millenial scheme? If so, it would follow that avarice is more or less beneficent after all, and that, as a lecturer on economics has observed, "where everybody owns everything nobody ever owns anything." It remains probable that as long as brain power shall dominate, energy and self-denial acquire, and ambition and rapacity attain their ends, Socialism will remain a dream which, as Senator Palmer said recently, humanity cannot afford to forego, but which will never be realized.

BESSIE B. CROFFUT.

THE DECLINE OF ECCLESIASTICISM.

THE Christian Church is in the midst of a great conflict. Never since the organization of Christianity have so many forces been arrayed against her. What certain theologians are pleased to term "the world power" was never stronger than it is to-day. No longer is the church opposed by barbaric races, by superstitious philosophers, by priests of mythical religions, but by the highest culture, the deepest learning, and the profoundest wisdom of enlightened nations. All along the line of her progress she is resisted by the "world power," which represents the highest attainments and the best ideals of the human mind.

Nor are all her opponents found beyond the pale. Within her solemn shades, robed in her vestments, voicing her commands, representing her to

the world, stand many who are ready to cast off her authority and dispute her supremacy. Multitudes who yet obey her decrees are beginning to question; and doubt is the first step towards disobedience and desertion.

The world will never know how many honest souls within the church groan in spirit and are troubled, yet keep a seal upon their lips and a chain upon their tongues "for conscience sake," lest they "cause their brother to offend." They are silent not for fear of rebuke, for the time has gone by when to speak freely was to suffer persecution, and when to suggest that the church might not be infallible was to be accused of infidelity.

To-day men do not grope their way by the aid of a rushlight. The noon-day sun now shines, and only the blind fail to perceive the dangers that lie in the way. On every hand within the church men freely admit that there are reasons for the great retrograde movement of the nineteenth century, which has borne, not only the so-called masses away from the church, but the "select few" as well. And here and there a bold voice is heard calling attention to the perils in her path. For a time these voices were silenced by a loud clamor of tongues, but they have at last commanded attention. And the watchmen who stand on the walls of Zion are neither few nor fearful. Courageous men, prophets of a new age, proclaim, with no uncertain sound, the demand, not of a new gospel, but of an old gospel with a new meaning.

Everywhere the demand is made for a more literal and faithful proclamation of the precepts of the founder of Christianity. "The Sermon on the Mount" is to many the epitome of divine philosophy. "Preach it I preach it!" cry reformers of every school everywhere; "not only preach it, but exemplify it." "Show us," they say, "that your practices conform to these precepts and we will believe you! Follow Christ, and we will follow you!"

But just here lies the controversy. The church professes to teach the precepts of Christ, to preach his gospel. The world listens and replies: "You have perverted the truth!" And behold the spectacle of an unbeliefing world teaching a believing church, the true principles of her religion! This is one of the most striking and significant signs of the age. And it is altogether new. The world has been familiar from the beginning with the retort: "Physician, heal thyself." But only in modern times have men ventured to say: "Physician, let us prescribe the medicine!"

Early in the Christian era, when to avow belief in Christianity was to imperil life, when persecution drove men to despair, he who found no place of rest on earth was taught to hope for repose in heaven. From the fiery furnaces of affliction men lifted up their hearts in hope of reward for all their pain. For every tear a jewel in their crown, for every sigh a song, for every hour of torture an age of bliss. And so at last the whole church looks upwards with weeping eyes and prays for release from earthly tribulation. Martyrdom becomes a sacrifice, and the departed spirit ascends, crowned and glorified, into heavenly places. But when the church at last emerged triumphant from the fiery baptism and became the supreme power on earth, when her devotees, in their woes, turned to her for relief, she said to them as at first: "Murmur not, my children. Endure the cross with patience, and you shall have reward in heaven." This has been her only answer to the cry of need through all the ages. To every appeal for consolation and help, she replies: "Wait:—trust:—be patient:—hope."

But human patience is not infinite, and there is a limit to the strongest faith. This answer might have been sufficient if the church had obeyed her own precepts. But when the poor and needy, the oppressed and sorrowing,

who were taught to look to Heaven for future recompense, saw holy priests and favored princes robed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day; saw them laying up treasures on earth in defiance of moth and rust and thieves; saw them, with easy consciences, serving God and mammon, they began to doubt the sincerity of the prophets.

And presently they began to affirm that all truth does not dwell under a church spire; that the church is powerless; that she cannot prevent misfortune, cannot heal the sick, cannot feed the hungry and clothe the naked, cannot raise the dead, cannot save the soul. Then they began to say that a church so weak, so worldly, could not be a divine institution. And soon they began to desert her altars. They said: "To deny the infallibility of the church, the efficacy of her ordinances, or the truth of her creeds, is not to deny the efficacy of religion. We are not at war with Christianity, but with the church's exposition of Christianity. Reverence for divine truth is compatible with the most profound contempt for ecclesiasticism. For that sublime Person who trod the earth, whose touch was life and whose smile was salvation, we have only veneration and love, but no longer for the institution that claims to represent Him."

The church denounces her accusers as unbelievers, and goes on her way, amassing treasure, building temples and palaces, making compacts with kings and covenants with mighty men, while the forces arrayed against her are increasing in numbers and power. She has lost her supremacy, her authority has passed away. She is but a sign, a shadow. And it is impossible for her to regain her lost ascendancy, or to return to her throne. Dreams of her universal dominion are delusion. Her sceptre has been broken forever. Already we are in a transition period. The revolutionary movement of the age is universal and irresistible. Thrones are beginning to totter. A volcano smoulders beneath the palaces of kings, and when thrones topple over pulpits will fall.

What then? A reign of anarchy and atheism? Some would-be seers predict it. But there are better things in store for the world. There have been revivals of religion in the past, more or less local and temporary. There is yet to be a revival of religion which is to be world-wide—a restoration of faith in God and love for man—when the brightest dreams of universal brotherhood shall be realized. But it will come in spite of, rather than through, the church. It will come as a reaction against ecclesiastical tyranny; as a protest against mere forms and ceremonials. It will, however, reach the church, change her creeds, modify her methods, and transform her spirit. All true souls within her communion will hail with gladness their emancipation from the tyranny of ecclesiasticism.

That revival is already on its way. A thousand signs herald its coming. Not the least significant are the earnest controversies within the church as to the essentials of faith. The moulds of doctrine are being broken. Large liberty of thought and expression is demanded. Partition walls are being broken down. Everywhere the cry is heard: "Break the chains of tradition and custom!" What form the faith of the future will assume who shall prophesy? There will be faith on earth while time endures. For man is essentially a religious being. Belief in God is a necessity of his nature. But he must be free to express his faith in forms suited to the age in which he lives.

JOHN EGERTON RAYMOND.